



25th Restoration commemorative issue

FURSE continued
from page 18

was sort of full time.

We went and got a grant from Church Women United to do a little slideshow on the Oregon Trail of Tears. Sue Shaffer's daughter provided amazing watercolors since we obviously did not have photographs of all of that. We put together this excellent slideshow, and Kathryn used it, as did the Cow Creeks when they went forward with their Restoration.

Q. When this was proposed to Congressman AuCoin and he was still smarting from helping the Siletz Restoration, what was the big thing that helped convince him to go along? Was it having the community support?

A. All of those things, as well as the flexibility of the Council. At first, he was reluctant due to all of the political ramifications. ... There was resistance in the whole Willamina area. People did not understand what Restoration would mean. They thought the Tribe would be able to take over private lands, which the Tribe cannot do and that would have never occurred to them. There were many misperceptions.

Working slowly with Congressman AuCoin, making sure that he trusted those Council members, and that they were not going to say anything to the press that was contrary to what they had already said. Very disciplined, you have to be.

I think he gained a great deal of trust with the Council and with the Tribe. It took awhile to get him to introduce the bill, but once he did, he was very enthusiastic and he worked very hard to get that bill through.

Q. As far as the Tribal Council that was there at the time, can you talk about the members you recall and what their strengths were as far as working on the Restoration effort?

A. Well, frankly, I always felt that Marvin Kimsey, that was not what he wanted to do. Well, he wanted to govern, but he buckled down and did what was necessary. The media work, being in the public, being the spokesperson; that really impressed me.

Margaret Provost was very quiet spoken, an intelligent voice. She was excellent at any kind of presentation.

Kathryn Harrison is tremendously inspiring. You know, she is a woman that has so much charisma that she was able to get across to people who were not interested in this information. She was able to get across to them that this was something that was important and something that was happening, and they worked together.

Now, am I saying that there were no disagreements? No, of course not. You have people in such a highly intense situation yet there were no disagreements that got in

the way of the Tribe's best interest. They set aside any personal conflicts of any kind. The Tribe was always first and foremost, and the Tribal members. It was fantastic to work with people like that.

Q. Earlier on you were talking about the political atmosphere of that time, late 1970s, early '80s. What was going on in the nation?

A. What started the change? Well, first, the President (Nixon) acknowledged the tremendous damage that Termination had done. ... John F. Kennedy said that there would be no more Termination bills. So, there was the beginning of that change. Charles Wilkinson of NARF (Native American Rights Fund), who was a lawyer, then a law professor at the University of Oregon, he and Ada Deer of the Menominee came up with the concept of Restoration.

In order to get Termination overturned you had to put in place something else. What you also had to do was persuade the United States Congress that they had made a mistake, which was a very tough thing to do. They do not think that they make mistakes. Anyway, it was the groundwork done by Ada Deer, chair of the Menominee Nation, and Charles Wilkinson that began to make it feasible for the Congress to conceive that they could admit that they had made a mistake.

That is what every Restoration bill is; it is the recognition by the Congress that this was not the right thing to do and we are righting the wrong. ... Self-determination, of course the whole era of self-determination came in 1972 with the Self-Determination Act. Tribes were losing out if they were not restored at that time. They were losing those funds.

The New Tribes Money made a difference for Tribes coming along, because again they did not have to persuade other Tribes, "Look you are going to have to take a cut" like we did with the Warm Springs. They did not balk at all, they said, "It's a justice issue." They saw it very clear as a justice issue. Restoration.

Termination has been, along with the Allotment Act, probably the most destructive piece of legislation that Congress has ever passed.

Q. Many of these Tribal Council members were working out of their comfort zones. Can you talk a little bit about the trips back to Washington? Any anecdotes you remember?

A. Well, first of all we were traveling on an absolutely "barebones budget," so we would fly in on the red-eye. We would arrive in Washington, D.C., at 6 a.m. I would have meetings scheduled. We did not have time to take an extra day. I had meetings scheduled from 9 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 10 a.m., 10:30 a.m. We covered those halls. Not only did we see our own delegation,

but we went to see people who were important in Indian issues. The Natural Resources Committee, Congressman (Dale) Kildee, who's head of the Native American Caucus. We were trying to gather friends, but also to make sure that the members of Congress knew what Restoration meant. It was new to them. Many of them were new; they had not been there when Siletz went through.

Kathryn always remembers ... she is so sweet ... she remembers it was hot and muggy. We were crossing from the House to the Senate and she was so tired. I said to her, "Would you like to sit here in the shade and I will go over there and see the Congressman?" She said "Yes, Elizabeth," and she sat there in the shade. They worked to the bone. Nobody spent an extra moment that they were not working. They had briefings in the morning, debriefings at night. What did you hear? How was it presented? What was your response? Because, of course, we broke up into groups. If there were four or five of us, we went in groups of two. We sent two to this and two to that.

Q. When you heard that it had been successful, can you remember your reaction at the time?

A. I can remember the elation when it passed. We knew it had to pass the House, then it would go to the Senate. The Senate was a lot easier because Sen. Mark Hatfield was chairman of the committee. I cannot recall if we had a Senate hearing, I think not. No, I think that we just had a House hearing. It went to the Senate committee. The Senate committee passed it out on to the floor. It was almost certain on the consent calendar. It comes up on Monday and if nobody objects, then it passes.

Q. I read an interview from about five years ago where you said Tribes were terminated because the federal government was trying to save money.

A. That was one of the reasons. Remember, it was after the second World War, in the 1950s. It is my belief that was the major reason for Termination in Oregon to the amount that it was. The interesting thing about Termination for Oregon is that Gov. (Douglas) McKay became Secretary of the Interior under Eisenhower. Gov. McKay had many friends in the timber industry. It is my belief that it was timber, in particular with the Klamath because Klamath had the largest stand of Ponderosa pine in the world. All of that pine went on the market, to McKay's friends. Moreover, it went off and over the mountain so the Klamath area lost millions of dollars worth of timber. It went to his friends on the west side, the big timber companies.

... It is my belief that Klamath was the goal, and while we are at it being active as Secretary of

Interior, let's terminate everybody else in Oregon. Sixty-one Tribes and Bands, many of those people are repeated over and over in the Termination Act. The little Bands that were not really operating at the time and many extinct from the terrible wars at the Trail of Tears era. Therefore, I think it was money, saving money.

Q. For anyone who is listening to this 25 years from now who is a Grand Ronde Tribal member, what about this effort do they really need to know?

A. I think that there is a perception, and this is very human, that, "Oh gosh, it must have been very easy and that it could have been done at anytime" just because it happened. Not true! At any moment that bill could have failed. The effort could have failed. The bill that finally passed was a bill that was as good as it was going to get. The Council was very clear on what their priorities were and they were very clear on listening to what the Congressman as well as what the Senator told them was possible.

Politics is the art of the possible. It is no good to say we want everything if we are not going to get anything. I think that the Council needs to be honored by their descendants because they did the impossible, and it was difficult.

Q. When you see an ad come on television for Spirit Mountain Casino, what do you think about the difference in the Tribe over the last 25 years?

A. I think it is wonderful. I think that like any government it has the right to develop its own economic strengths. They did that. The legislation of the National Indian Gaming Regulatory Act is clear. Tribes have the right to do gaming under a contract, and the Tribe, the Grand Ronde, have done very well with it. They have a wonderful location. ... I like the way the Grand Rondes have invested in other things. They have not put all of their eggs into one basket. They have looked to the future.

Q. Is there something that you have not talked about that you think is important for Tribal members to know about the people, the effort or the hurdles that had to be overcome?

A. I think the thing to remember is what it was like before Restoration, what that was, as Kathryn's daughter testified. As a young person going to the powwow and the Indian people didn't even think you were Indian. The hurt she felt because she was not part of a federally recognized Tribe. She testified in Congress the hurt she felt. People have to remember what they have gained. There will, of course, be people that say we should have this or we should have had that. Not so! They got the very best there was going to be.

... Grand Ronde had nothing, nothing. They had no land, no economic development opportunities. They took the very best they could get and have made it better. I just hope the Tribal members will understand that, that they were magnificent that Council. ■